

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA

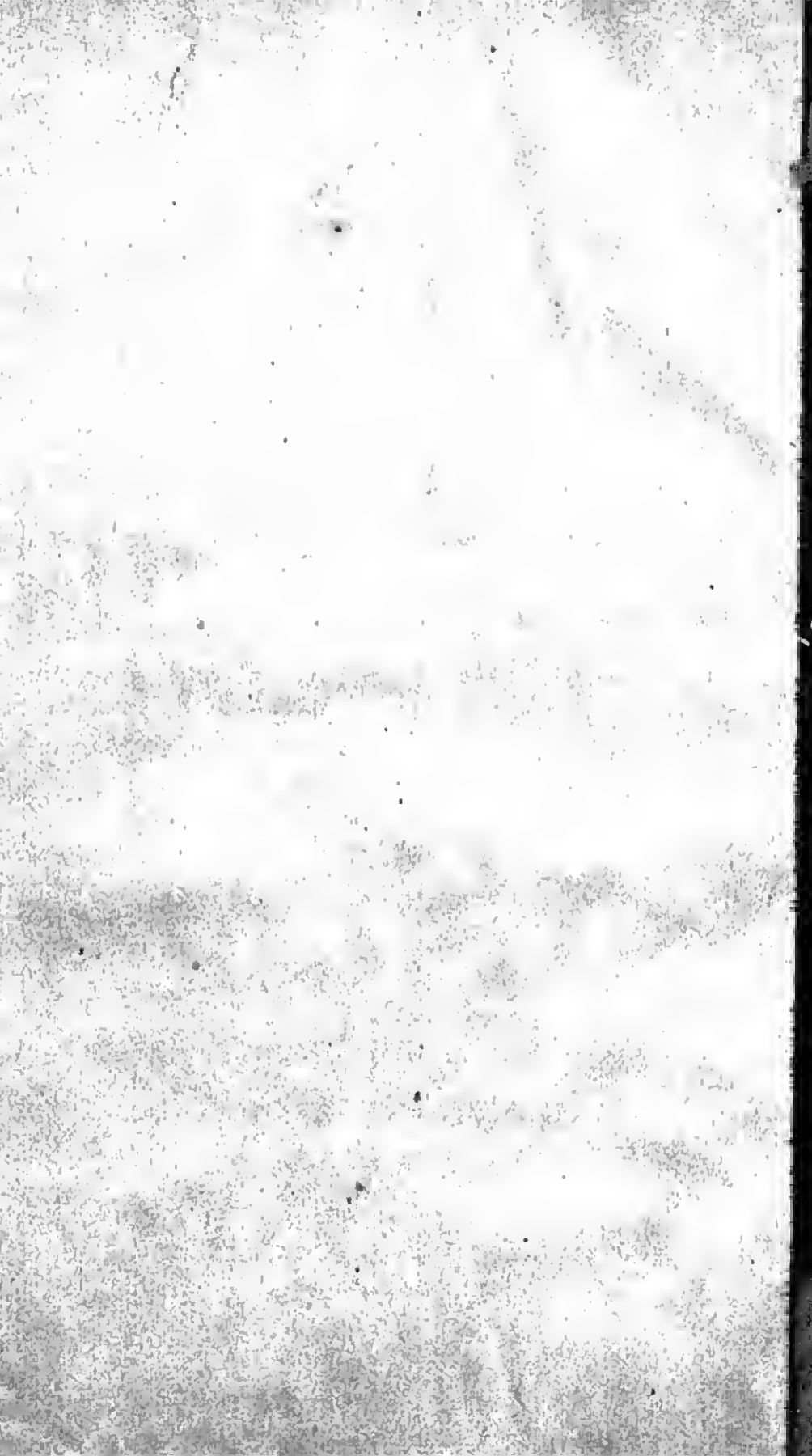
CENTRAL  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
LIBRARY

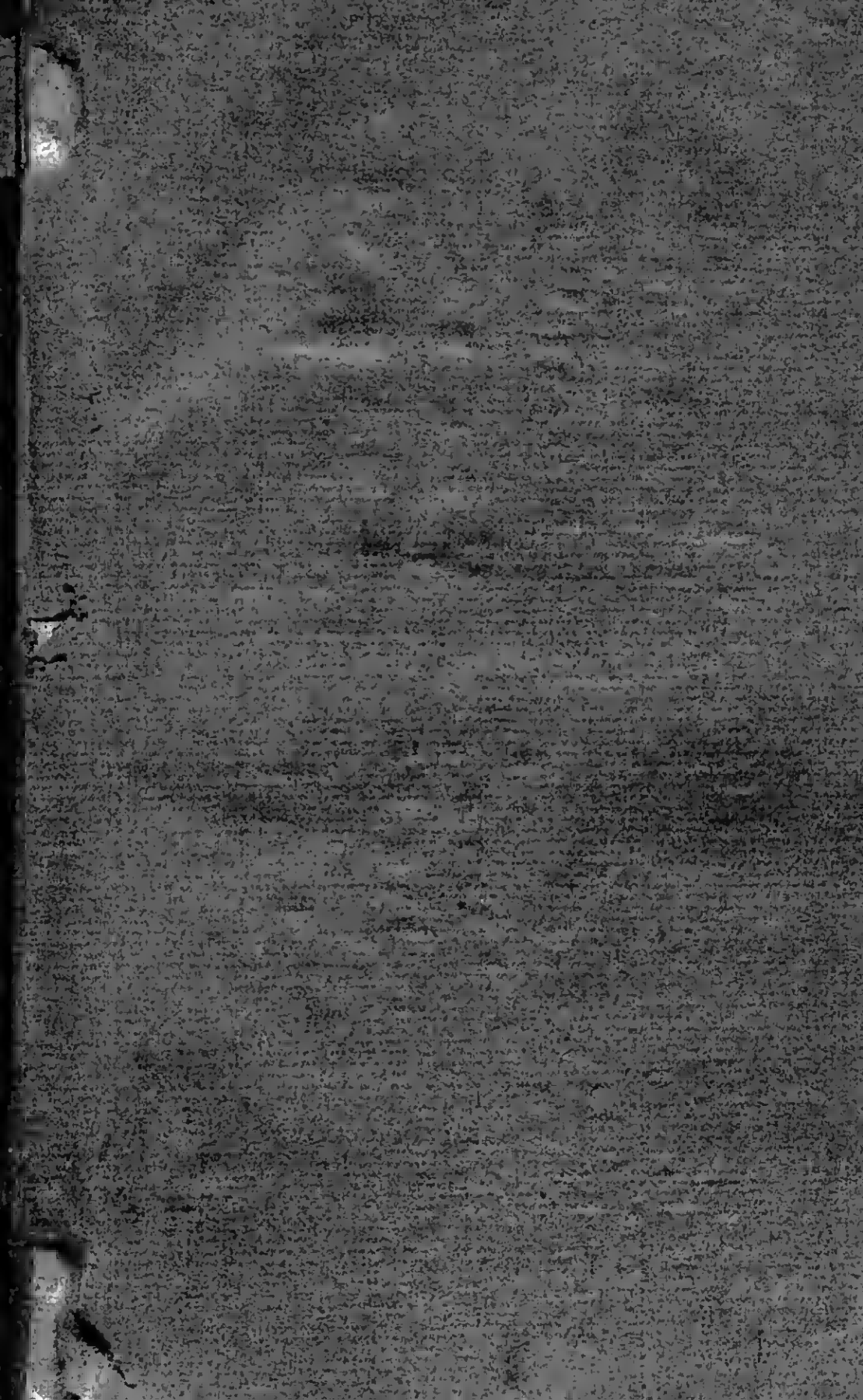
ACCESSION NO. 33779

CALL No. 736.309358/Gad

D.G.A. 79









Second Copy

Seals of Ancient Indians

Style found at

By

E. J. Gadsden

E. J. Gadsden



# SEALS OF ANCIENT INDIAN STYLE FOUND AT UR

BY  
C. J. GADD

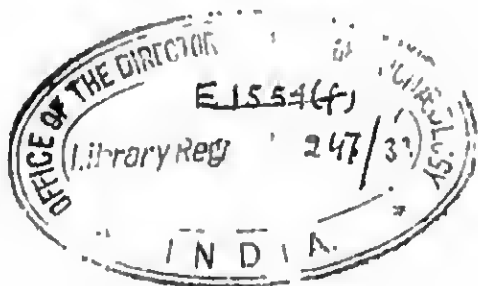


~~E 1554(f)~~ ~~E 1554(f)~~

736.309358

Gad

FROM THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
BRITISH ACADEMY. VOLUME XVIII  
LONDON : HUMPHREY MILFORD  
AMEN HOUSE, E.C.





CENTRAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
LIBRARY, NEW DELHI.

Acc. No.....33779 .....

Date.....13.5.58 .....

Call No.....736.309358 .....

Qad.

# SEALS OF ANCIENT INDIAN STYLE FOUND AT UR

By C. J. GADD

*Communicated* October 19, 1932

THE very great interest which has, in the last few years, been attracted to the excavations of two early sites, Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, in the valley of the Indus, was first aroused by Sir John Marshall's revelation of his discoveries in the autumn of 1924. Notable similarities to various Mesopotamian antiquities were not long in being observed and pointed out, but the most remarkable of all the objects found, the seals engraved with animal-figures and inscriptions in a completely unknown character, were not in themselves comparable with Mesopotamian seals, even if the new signs were occasionally reminiscent of the early Sumerian pictographs. It is not a little surprising, therefore, that in the preceding autumn (1923) a specimen of these Indian seals had been found by a scientific expedition<sup>1</sup> working at the site of the ancient city of Kish; near the Euphrates. With this evidence alone it became manifest that the cultural similarities between the two regions must have depended upon a definite contact in historical times; at what period could not be inferred from the position in which the seal was found at Kish, beyond the assurance that it was at least before 2000 B.C. Early in 1924 a seal of the same type was purchased by the Louvre, and this was said to have been found in the ruins of Lagash, a celebrated site in southern Babylonia. In publishing this acquisition M. Thureau-Dangin<sup>2</sup> observed that the attribution to Lagash might well be justified in view of the authenticated discovery at Kish, and also drew attention to the presence

<sup>1</sup> The Herbert Weld (for Oxford University) and Field Museum of Natural History (Chicago) Expedition to Mesopotamia. See E. Mackay ✓ in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1925, 697 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Revue d'Assyriologie*, xxii. 99 ff.

of two more seals of this kind in the collection of the Louvre, which were known to have been found at Lagash and Susa respectively. Meantime an imprint of such a seal upon the fragment of a clay label from a bale of cloth had also been published<sup>1</sup> by Father Scheil, and this was said to come from the site of Umma, the neighbour city of Lagash. Since that time another example has been recovered from Lagash in the resumed excavations there,<sup>2</sup> and recently others have come to light at Kish<sup>3</sup> and at Tell Asmar (Ashnunnak).<sup>4</sup> Two unconnected specimens are of very recent revelation, both having been obtained from dealers; one in the possession of Professor A. B. Cook of Cambridge,<sup>5</sup> and a second (no. 18 in this paper), with unusually interesting features, very lately given to the British Museum.<sup>6</sup> Other isolated examples which have been illustrated—one belonging to Baron von Bissing<sup>7</sup> and one in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts<sup>8</sup>—may belong to the original find<sup>9</sup> which first brought these seals to Europe, three of them into the Department of Ethnography in the British Museum.

At the moment of writing, therefore, there have been seven seals and one imprint of the Indus style identified as coming from Mesopotamian sites (if Susa may be included, for convenience), as well as two others mentioned above of undefined origin but almost certainly from Babylonia. A considerable addition to this number is made by the specimens found at various times and places in the excavations at Ur, which I am enabled to present here by the kind

<sup>1</sup> *Revue d'Assyriologie*, xxii. 56.

<sup>2</sup> H. de Genouillac in *Revue d'Assyriologie*, xxvii. 177.

<sup>3</sup> S. Langdon in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1931, 593 ff.

<sup>4</sup> H. Frankfort in *The Times*, 26 March 1932.

<sup>5</sup> S. Langdon in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1932, 47 f.

<sup>6</sup> Egyptian and Assyrian Dept. no. 123059: *British Museum Quarterly*, vii. 5.

<sup>7</sup> *Archiv für Orientforschung*, iv. 21.

<sup>8</sup> *Bulletin*, 1929, 28.

<sup>9</sup> For this first discovery see Marshall, *Mohenjo-Daro and the Indus Civilization*, ii. 370.

permission of the Directors of the British Museum and of the University Museum of Pennsylvania. These seals must, of course, be compared with the much more numerous 'native' specimens recently published in so splendid a manner by Sir John Marshall and his collaborators in *Mohenjo-Daro and the Indus Civilization*, a work which will be represented hereinafter by the initial M.

*No. 1.* First among the seals discovered at Ur is the unique object (Plate I, no. 1), formerly illustrated and described by Mr. C. L. Woolley in the *Antiquaries Journal*, vol. viii, pl. xi. 2, and p. 26, which is now in the British Museum.<sup>1</sup> It measures  $1\frac{1}{8} \times \frac{11}{16} \times \frac{1}{8}$  in., is made of grey steatite, and on the back is shaped into a ridge perforated lengthwise, thus belonging to the class of 'button' seals, which form is characteristic of the Indus style.<sup>2</sup> On the face stands, below, the figure of a bull with head bent down, as on certain Indian examples,<sup>3</sup> but there is no trace of the manger (?) in front of the bull which is found at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, the horns are shown in full development, not in the 'unicorn' convention, and there is a narrow band thrown over the animal midway along the back.<sup>4</sup> The figure is divided from the inscription above by a horizontal line, which never appears with the unknown script. It is, however, the inscription itself which is the main point of interest, for it is in archaic cuneiform writing. It is always hazardous to date an object solely by the epigraphy of a cuneiform inscription, especially in the case of seals, and here, therefore, it is well not to attempt greater exactitude than is conveyed by the statement that these signs are in any case pre-Sargonic, that is, of a period before 2500 B.C. There are three signs and very probably traces of a fourth,

<sup>1</sup> Egyptian and Assyrian Dept. no. 120573. See also *Museum Journal*, Philadelphia, 1929, pl. xli.

<sup>2</sup> The boss on the back is more tubular than any shown in M. III. cn, and has no groove.

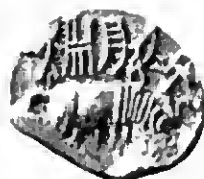
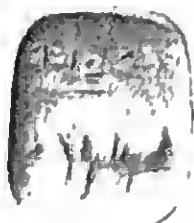
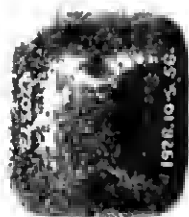
<sup>3</sup> The bull is the short-horned bull described in M. II. 385, and the attitude is the same.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. M. III. cx. 310, 312, 318, 319, 322.

almost obliterated; the three preserved are themselves scratchy and rather worn, though not ill-formed. Hence their reading is doubtful—the choices are, for the first SAG(K) or KA, for the second KU or possibly LU, while the third is almost certainly ŠI, and the fourth, if it existed at all, is quite uncertain. To all this uncertainty is also to be added, of course, the polyphony of the cuneiform signs, and the result is that the total number of possible readings would be considerable. Nevertheless, using the commonest values of the signs, *sak-ku-ši* - - (with possible loss of something at the end) may be pronounced the best provisional reading. Unfortunately, as the cuneiform stands alone it helps nothing towards the reading of the Indus script, and upon the possible word thus obtained it would be idle to speculate. It does not, at least, seem to be any Sumerian or Akkadian name. Not only the inscription but the style of the object and of the carving make it unlikely that this seal should be ascribed to the Indus valley. It is either a local imitation, made at Ur, of a foreign type, or, more probably, a product of some place under the influence both of the Indus and of the Sumerian civilizations. Mr. Woolley has already stated that there is no evidence to be gained as to the date of this object from the circumstances in which it was found.

No. 2. Next to be described is the subject of Plate I, no. 2. This is a circular stamp-seal, only slightly broken on one side; diam. 1 in., height  $\frac{1}{8}$  in.; now in the British Museum, no. 122187. It was obtained at Ur in the season 1928-9, but there is no evidence of where it was found. The material is the regular light, flaky steatite of the Indus seals, with the highly-glazed white surface that looks like enamel, the back has a pronounced 'button' boss, pierced in one direction and divided across the other by a groove, as the illustration shows.<sup>1</sup> On the face is the short-horned bull figure with lowered head, the legs being mostly obliterated, and above is an inscription of five characters, which are

<sup>1</sup> On the glaze see M. II. 379, and for the back M. III. cii. k.l.



1

2



3



4

5




6

7

SEALS OF INDIAN STYLE FROM UR

17

adequately shown by the illustration; the first (over the bull's head) is . In material, style, and inscription, therefore, this object might be of native Indian production; only the circular shape<sup>1</sup> is decidedly unusual at Mohenjodaro and Harappa.

*No. 3.* The subject of Plate I, no. 3, was found at Ur in the season 1930-1 but again without archaeological context: it is now in the British Museum, 122946 (excavation number U. 17342). Measurements,  $1 \times \frac{1}{2}$  in. Not quite half is preserved, but enough to show that it was a stamp-seal of the 'button' type, and that it bore an Indian inscription the remains of which are clearly seen in the photograph. Its material is a greenish-grey steatite, not so flaky in appearance as usual, and only suggestions of the creamy surface remain.

*No. 4* was found at Ur in the same year as the preceding. It is now in the British Museum, no. 122188, and measures  $\frac{3}{4} \times \frac{1}{2}$  in. (Plate I, no. 4). This is a mere fragment, more of the back than of the face being preserved, but in every respect it is similar to the foregoing more complete example, and had an Indian inscription of which only the 'fish' sign and a fragment of another are preserved.

*No. 5.* Of the next (Plate I, no. 5) the lower half of the face alone survives. This fragment was found at Ur in the season 1930-1; excavation number U. 17341, now in the University Museum of Pennsylvania, dimensions  $1 \times \frac{1}{2}$  in. It appears to have come from the mostly unexplored area called Diqdiqqah, outside the city, where many small finds are made by the workmen and their families. As the illustration shows, it resembles the foregoing seals in every way, the material of this one being a brownish grey steatite turning to the familiar creamy colour towards the top. The animal has a tail with a prominently-marked 'point'.

*Nos. 6, 7.* These may be considered together, for, in contrast with all the others, they are not stamp-seals but

<sup>1</sup> See M. II. 375 (three specimens only).



cylinders, a type which is hardly known at Mohenjo-Daro<sup>1</sup> and Harappa, but is of course characteristic of Babylonia. No. 6 (B.M. 122947, 1 in.  $\times$   $\frac{5}{8}$  in.) is a cylinder of some white stone, perforated in the usual way, and having at each end grooves with the outer edges nicked, probably to be fitted with metal caps, as we see also upon those found at Susa and at Tell Asmar. No. 6 came from Ur in the season 1930-1, having been discovered in a vaulted tomb which is apparently that described<sup>2</sup> by Mr. Woolley as 'a Larsa tomb which had been hacked down into' a wall dividing two apartments in the 'N.W. annexe' added by Bur-Sin, king of Ur, to the funerary building of his father. The design shows a palm-tree, before which stands a humped bull, feeding from a round manger, or perhaps a bundle of fodder is intended.<sup>3</sup> Behind the bull is a scorpion and two snakes, and above the whole a human figure, placed horizontally, with fantastically long arms and legs, and rays about his head. The style of the bull, and the object before him, are evidently in close relation with the like representations on the Indus seals, and the strange human figure would be hard to parallel on Babylonian seals: this example is evidently Indian or under strong Indian influence. The same is true of Plate I, no. 7 (excavation number U. 11958), of which only a photograph is at present accessible. A bull, unhumped, of the so-called 'unicorn' type, raises his head towards a simplified version of a tree, and two uncertain objects, one a sort of trefoil,<sup>4</sup> are shown above his back. Under his head is an unmistakable character of the Indus script, the 'fish' with cross-hatchings.

Plate II shows six round stamp-seals, of a remarkably uniform style, though all differing completely in the devices

<sup>1</sup> See M. II. 371 and 381, n. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Antiquaries Journal*, xi. 357.

<sup>3</sup> The humped bulls from Mohenjo-Daro (M, nos. 327-40) are not depicted with a 'manger', and in the present example the 'manger' is different from those which stand before the short-horned bulls.

<sup>4</sup> They may be two more characters of the writing, nos. CCLXIII and CLXXIII respectively of the Sign-Manual in M. III. The former sign occurs in no. 15 and perhaps in no. 12.

which they bear. No. 11 is the most like in its shape to Plate I, 2 and 4, and to the Mohenjo-Daro round seals (M. III. *ch. k, l*), for it has at the back a central boss rising to an unusually high cone, and a groove across the middle of it, but differs in adding the four small circles with centre-spots which will be observed on all the others shown in this Plate. As for the remaining five, their shape is noticeably different from the 'Indian' type. The bosses are very large, occupying all but a narrow margin of the back, and rise only to a moderate height. There is the usual perforation made to slope downwards from the two ends,<sup>1</sup> but the bosses are divided (in all but no. 11) by a treble or double groove, and there are the characteristic circles already noticed. Following are the descriptions of the several examples.

*No. 8* (B.M. 118704, excavator's number U. 6020; diam.  $\frac{13}{16}$  in., ht.  $\frac{7}{16}$  in.). This seal is of light grey steatite with the usual creamy surface, worn away in places and thus exposing the grey underneath. The scene represented appears to be one of sacrifice; two figures carry between them a vase, and one presents a goat-like animal which he holds by the neck. In both the kinds of creatures represented this seal is quite unlike those from Mohenjo-Daro. The goat has no resemblance to the 'antelope' which may be depicted in M. III, pl. cx, nos. 302, 303, and the human figures none to the demons or men of nos. 356-8, nor to the statuettes and figurines of M. III; pls. xciv, xcv, xcvi-c. On the other hand, the skirts marked with three rows of vertical strokes have an unmistakable likeness to the characteristic early Sumerian garment of fleccc, and the style of delineating the heads and the attitude of the goat would be entirely normal as Sumerian. Indeed, the interest of this seal resides in its combination of a Sumerian device with a form and material which are no less clearly those of the Indus civilization.<sup>2</sup> The object was found at Ur in the season

<sup>1</sup> See M. II. 377; but in these the slope is steeper, owing to the slighter protuberance of the bosses.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Plate III, no. 14, and p. 13 below.

1925-6, loose in the soil close to the surface in the area<sup>1</sup> designated as EH.

*No. 9* (B.M. 122945, excavator's number U. 16181; diam.  $\frac{7}{8}$  in., ht.  $\frac{7}{8}$  in.). Found at Ur, without context, in the season 1930-1, this is a good deal worn and partly broken both on front and back. It is again of a greenish-grey steatite, exposed over most of the surface by the detrition of the glaze, of which, however, a good deal still remains, of the usual substance and colour. The engraved face is divided into four quadrants by lines, each of which terminates at the edge of the seal in some elaborately shaped object which is most probably a vase out of which the dividing lines spring. Each of the quadrants (though one is mostly destroyed) is occupied by a naked figure, sitting so that, following round the circle, the head of one is placed nearest to the feet of the preceding. Two of these figures (in alternate quadrants) clasp their hands upon their breasts, the other (as probably also the fourth) spreads out the arms, making a beckoning gesture with one hand.

*No. 10* (B.M. 120576, excavator's number U. 9265; diam.  $\frac{11}{16}$  in., ht.  $\frac{1}{2}$  in.). Found at Ur, without context, in the season 1926-7. This seal is also of steatite and has the usual features, as may be seen in the Plate. The device is puzzling; there is, below, a bull with long horns roughly depicted, but above is a rather uncertain addition, which is perhaps an attempt to show one (or possibly two) more, in a couching position, as viewed by turning the seal round until the face of the standing bull is downwards. If this is intended, the head of the second bull is turned back, and it is not, perhaps, quite impossible that the remaining part of the design is meant for a bird, such as is fairly often seen perched upon the back of a bull in Sumerian art, a device which has not yet been certainly explained.<sup>2</sup> Its occurrence here is far too doubtful to be dwelt upon.

*No. 11* (University Museum of Pennsylvania, excavator's

<sup>1</sup> *Antiquaries Journal*, vol. vi, pl. LVIII.

<sup>2</sup> See *al-'Uba'id*, p. 97.



8



9



10



11



12



13

SEALS OF INDIAN STYLE FROM UR



number U. 16397; diam.  $\frac{11}{16}$  in., ht.  $\frac{17}{16}$  in.). Found at Ur, without context, in the season 1930-1. As already observed, this seal has an unusually high boss and a single groove across it. Otherwise it does not differ, in material or style, from the rest. The device is notable, a scorpion and an eye (?). The latter (or at least a similar elliptical character) appears in the script (M, pl. cxxi) both alone and with a number of modifications. The scorpion is, however, of doubtful occurrence in the script. Mr. Mackay suggests (M. II, p. 392) that the fairly common character (ibid., pl. cxxviii, no. cccli) 'may be a scorpion', but it seems to me very improbable, and among the few signs which at least may represent creeping things, it is not possible to identify the scorpion. Nevertheless this seal strongly suggests writing, an idea which is reinforced by no. 12 on the same plate, and by the analogy of the early Minoan 'hieroglyphic' seals. If so, this is an example of the 'Indus' script in an unconventionalized form, and thereby of great interest. But the same thing is more notably represented in the next example, to which we proceed.

No. 12 (University Museum of Pennsylvania, excavator's number U. 16747; diam. 1 in., ht.  $\frac{11}{16}$  in.). Found at Ur in the season 1930-1, 'from upper rubbish, Kassite (?) level', over one of the houses<sup>1</sup> in the domestic quarter. The seal itself, as may be seen from the illustration, is of the same type as the others, but its device is of peculiar interest, the central figure being that of a water-carrier, with a skin (or pot?) hung on each end of the yoke across his shoulders and another one below the crook of his left arm. The vessel hanging from the right end of his yoke is over some object which looks like a stand with high sides, but may represent a receptacle for the water. On either side of the man's head is a star, and the whole subject is enclosed by 'parenthesis' marks. This is, of course, an unmistakable example of an 'hieroglyphic' seal, a legend in the form of fully-developed

<sup>1</sup> See *Antiquaries Journal*, vol. xi, pl. XLVII.

pictures, for the water-carrier with his yoke and two skins (?) is one of the most identifiable figures in the ordinary script (see M, pl. cxxix, nos. ccclxxxvi ff.), the object under the man's left arm appears as clxxviii in the same list, the 'pot-stand' is probably cccxvii, the 'parenthesis' marks are xx; the stars are not obviously represented in the Sign-Manual. The object most closely comparable with this seal is the fragment of an ivory plaque from Mohenjo-Daro (M, vol. iii, pl. cxxxii, no. 10, cf. vol. ii, p. 562 f. and 408) which shows a man *plene scriptus*, as it were, for the last character listed in the Sign-Manual. Among the seals, however, whether from India or Mesopotamia, the present example is unique in character, with the possible exception, as suggested above, of the preceding number.

No. 13 (B.M. 122841, diam.  $\frac{1}{8}$  in., ht.  $\frac{3}{8}$  in.). Found at Ur in the season 1929-30, without context. Materially the seal is of the usual type. The face is quartered by four forked branches springing from the angles of a small square, with some internal decoration, in the middle. In each of the four spaces thus formed is an uncertain decoration, which might be an animal head, except for the circle with centre-spot which can be seen in them. The device seems purely decorative.

No. 14 (Platc III, University Museum of Pennsylvania, CBS. 16301, excavation number U. 7027, diam. 1 in., ht.  $\frac{7}{8}$  in.). This seal, and the next to be mentioned, have been published by Dr. Legrain in the *Philadelphia Museum Journal* for 1929; this one is figured on pl. xxxviii as no. 94 and is described on the opposite page. Dr. Legrain has very kindly supplied me with the photograph that I reproduce here showing the back of the seal, which appears to be entirely similar to the foregoing specimens. The Sumerian character of the device is strongly marked, especially in the ithyphallic bull-men, the so-called 'Enkidu' figure which is extremely common upon Babylonian cylinders of the early period. Nor is there anything in the seated god that is

un-Babylonian; he and the bull-men all have horned head-dresses, and the moon-symbols upon poles seem to represent the door-posts that the pair of 'twin'<sup>1</sup> genii are commonly seen supporting on either side of a god. The bull standing underneath is more doubtful, but even this is not markedly Indian, since it does not wholly correspond with any of the Mohenjo-Daro types described in M, vol. ii, 382 ff. This, then, is a seal completely of the 'Indus' type so far as material and shape are concerned, whereas the device is much rather Babylonian than Indian. In this respect it may be compared with no. 8 (see p. 9 above).

No. 15 (University Museum of Pennsylvania, excavation number U. 8685, diam.  $\frac{1}{8}$  in.). Found at Ur in the season 1926-7, in the cemetery area, in a ruined grave 0.9 metres from the surface, together with a pair of gold ear-rings of the double-crescent type and long beads of steatite and carnelian, two of gilt copper, and others of lapis-lazuli, carnelian, and banded sard. These contents, and the small depth from the surface, suggest that this grave belonged to the Sargonic<sup>2</sup> series, and if this may be presumed, it is a point of importance for the dating of these objects, a subject that will be considered later. This seal has, like the preceding, been published and described in the *Museum Journal* for 1929, pl. xli and p. 306, by Dr. Legrain, to whom I am indebted for the photograph which appears here. The inscription is crowded and not very distinct, the most remarkable sign being the first one to the left (in the impression) having the form of a flower or perhaps an animal's skin with curly tail. This does not seem to be found elsewhere, and the round spot upon the bull's back is also curious.

No. 16, is the last of the Ur series to be described. It was found in the excavations of 1931-2 (B.M. 123208, excavation

<sup>1</sup> *Archiv für Orientforschung*, v. 2:18 f.

<sup>2</sup> See Woolley in *Antiquaries Journal*, vol. viii, p. 3, who mentions 1.25 metres as the depth of a Sargonic grave identified by a seal.





number U. 17649, diam.  $\frac{7}{8}$  in.). The context in this case was definite; it occurred in the filling of a tomb-shaft which Mr. Woolley ascribes<sup>1</sup> to the Second Dynasty of Ur. Here the bull is without a 'manger' or anything under the head, and the four characters, though rather roughly shaped (indeed, the workmanship of this seal is poor throughout), are all well known. There are few traces of the customary 'glaze' on the surface of the seal, but it can be plainly traced at the bottom of the carvings. The back, boss, and perforation are of the style of nos. 2-5.

The foregoing sixteen examples have all been found in or about the excavations at Ur in the last few years. As an appendix to them this is a convenient place to add two more seals of the same class, not connected with Ur, but almost certainly found at some other place in Babylonia, as to which there is no evidence.

No. 17. The first has long been in the Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities at the British Museum, and is numbered 120228: I am enabled to include this and the next seal by permission of the Keeper. It is of the usual glazed steatite, and originally had the pierced boss at the back but this is now broken away, leaving only the trace of the boring. The object is also a little damaged at the edges by the chipping off of the surface; its diameter is 1 in. There is, unfortunately, no information as to its origin.<sup>2</sup> The bull is of the short-horned variety and stands over the 'manger' generally associated with this animal on the Mohenjo-Daro seals. The inscription is well preserved and can be plainly seen in the illustration; the signs are in the best Indian style.

No. 18. The other is a recent acquisition<sup>3</sup> of the same Department in the British Museum. It was noticed among

<sup>1</sup> *Antiquaries Journal*, vol. xii, pp. 362-4.

<sup>2</sup> It is possible that this is the seal referred to by Professor Sayce in *Antiquity*, 1927, p. 206 n., as having been published by Terrien de Lacouperie many years ago in the *Proceedings* of the Society of Biblical Archaeology. I regret that I have not as yet been able to find this article.

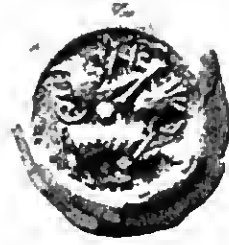
<sup>3</sup> *British Museum Quarterly*, vol. vii. 5 ff.



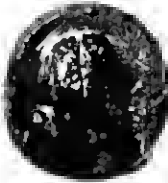
14



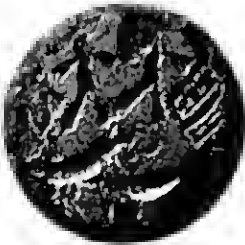
15



16



17



18



SEALS OF INDIAN STYLE: UR AND BABYLONIA



a London dealer's stock, to which it had come from another dealer in Baghdad. There is, consequently, a presumption, as in the preceding instance, that the object was found somewhere in Babylonia. It is now numbered 123059, and has a diameter of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in. and height  $\frac{1}{2}$  in., being therefore of unusual size. The material is steatite, almost black, but covered with the usual creamy glaze which is worn off at the edges. The illustration shows both the face of the original, and an impression, which makes the subject clearer; the back has the usual boss, with single groove, and perforation. On the face is an engraving somewhat damaged but still quite plain. Above there is an inscription of five characters, most prominent among them two 'men' standing side by side. To the right of these (in the impression) is a damaged 'fish' sign, and to the left two others which closely resemble CCXCVII and XXVIII of the Sign-Manual in M. Below is a unique representation of a bull in the act of mating with a cow; the head and legs of the cow are rather obscured by damage and the tuft at the end of the tail is summarily shaped like an arrow-head, but nevertheless the purport of the device is quite clear. As already observed it has not as yet been found on any other of these seals.

The individual seals having been thus described, it remains to say something upon two subjects, the shape and dating of these objects.

It will have been observed that what may be called the 'Mesopotamian' seals of this class differ from the great majority of those found in India in two principal respects—the prevalence of the round instead of rectangular shape in the stamp-seals, and the much higher proportion of cylinders to stamps. To take the latter first: cylinders are hitherto a rarity among the Indian finds, only five<sup>1</sup> (and those not certainly seals) having appeared at Mohenjo-Daro. But among the much smaller total hitherto found in Babylonia there are already several cylinders, namely, from Susa (Delaporte, *Catologue des cylindres etc. du Louvre*,

<sup>1</sup> M. II. 371, 381, n. 3, 425, n. 1.

pl. 25, no. 15), from Ur (nos. 6 and 7 in the present publication), and from Ashnunnak (Frankfort in *The Times*, 26 March 1932). This greater frequency of cylinders is perhaps to be expected in a land where the cylinder-seal was generally the standard, but these 'Indus' seals display in general so completely foreign a character that they might not be expected to have been influenced by the custom of the land in which they chance to be found. Their devices and inscriptions (when existing) are purely Indian. It would be of interest to compare the material of which they are made with that of the stamp-seals. The Susa cylinder is described as of 'bone' by Delaporte in his *Catalogue*, p. 45 (s. 299); Dr. Frankfort has kindly told me that the Ashnunnak seal was of steatite, so far as he could judge by inspection. Of the two Ur specimens no. 7 (U. 11958) is at present inaccessible. The other, no. 6 (U. 16220), is of a fairly hard white substance, which shows white even in fractures. I am not in a position to obtain an expert identification of this material, but Dr. Plenderleith, of the British Museum Laboratory, has informed me, after applying various tests, that he is disposed to think it is neither ivory, shell, nor steatite, but some harder kind of white stone. At present, therefore, it is not possible to obtain by means of the material any suggestion as to the origin of these pieces. As to the prevalence of the round shape over the rectangular—the direct opposite of what is found at Mohenjo-Daro—this is very marked<sup>1</sup> among the specimens at present recovered from Babylonia, but it is hardly possible to draw any inference from this fact save that the import into Babylonia probably did not come from Mohenjo-Daro or Harappa.

<sup>1</sup> At the moment of writing, and including those published here, the exact proportion is, round 17, rectangular 7, viz. round: 15 in the present article; Delaporte, *Catalogue des cylindres du Louvre*, pl. 11. 8; *J.R.A.S.*, 1932, 48; rectangular: *J.R.A.S.*, 1925, 697, and 1931, 595; *R.A.* xxii. 56 and 99; *Archiv für Orientforschung*, iv. 21; 'cuneiform' seal from Ur (no. 1 here), square stamp from Ashnunnak (*The Times*, 26 Mar. 1932). The shape of one reported by de Genouillac in *R.A.* xxvii. 177 is not stated.

But since it is evident that many other sites of the same civilization must have existed, and will doubtless in time be explored, this conclusion is of no great interest.

The amount of evidence which the discovery of these seals at Ur has furnished for the determining of their date is rather disappointing. None the less what indications they do give, as well as those which are being obtained on other sites, seem to corroborate the judgements which were expressed several years ago about the approximate date of the flourishing period of the 'Indus' civilization. Among the seals from Ur published here there are four only which are described as having been found in possibly datable circumstances:


- (a) No. 6, from 'a Larsa tomb which had been hacked down into' a wall dividing two rooms in a building of the Third Dynasty of Ur,
  - (b) No. 12, from 'upper rubbish, Kassite (?) level' over a house, presumably of the Larsa period, in the domestic quarter.
  - (c) No. 15, apparently in place in a burial indicated both by its contents and by its position as belonging to the Sargonic age.
  - (d) No. 16, found in the filling of a tomb-shaft which Mr. Woolley ascribes to the Second Dynasty of Ur.
- Among the seals of this class from other Babylonian sites there is evidence for:
- (e) Kish 1 (*Journ. Roy. Asiat. Soc.*, 1925, 697 ff.). The description of its position is not very clear, but it seems to have lain under a pavement of Samsuiluna (*ibid.*, 1931, 593).
  - (f) Kish 2 (*ibid.*, 1931, 593): Sargonic or pre-Sargonic.
  - (g) Ashnunnak (*The Times*, 26 Mar. 1932): 'private houses dating from the time of the Dynasty of Akkad'.
  - (h) Telloh (*Rev. d'Assyriologie*, xxvii. 177): 'niveau des objets de l'époque de Gudéa ou des restes de l'âge de Larsa'.

The latest date mentioned above is the 'Kassite (?) level'

in (b), but the description shows that this object was evidently loose, and there are sufficient reasons why the Kassite period cannot be regarded as a serious possibility. The *terminus ante quem* is rather the Isin-Larsa-Babylon age (in round figures 2000 B.C.) which is indicated by (a) and (e), above. A rather earlier date is said to be possible for (h), while the Sargonic, or even pre-Sargonic, period is indicated by (c), (d), (f), and (g), among which, it will be observed, are some of the most precise indications. The evidence for dating the buildings and other finds at Mohenjo-Daro is discussed in various passages of Sir John Marshall's first two volumes, with the general conclusion that, by Babylonian standards, the civilization which produced these seals flourished in the pre-Sargonic age, that is, in the earlier half of the third millennium B.C. Circumstances in India and Babylonia thus concur in revealing that there existed in the valley of the Indus a high civilization which maintained active communication with Babylonia just at a time when the civilization of that land was also standing at its height; this prosperity cannot have been fostered by anything but trade. The discovery of the Indus civilization has been an unexpected admonition of how far it may be necessary to look beyond local boundaries to comprehend the factors which governed the lives even of the most ancient peoples known to history.

It has not been thought necessary to give a copy of the inscriptions upon the seals here published since they are sufficiently clear in the photographs. It is proper, however, to point out that these inscriptions contain a number of unusual signs, judged by the material from Mohenjo-Daro. Thus, in the inscription of no. 2 the first sign (reading from right of the impression) is new, the fourth and fifth new variations. In that of no. 3 there is a long, branch-like appendage to the 'man' sign and perhaps some other novelties rather obscured by the damage. There are several very strange-looking characters on no. 15, but the photograph is insufficiently clear and the original not

accessible. The five signs on the large newly-acquired seal no. 18 are not indeed new, but they are written with certain peculiarities such as the disproportionate size of the 'men' and the slight variants in the last two signs. Until more is known about this script it is hardly possible to suggest any reason for such peculiarities as seem to exist.

It will not, perhaps, be out of place to refer briefly to another matter which cannot indeed be elucidated, but is apposite here. In the excavations at Ur in 1926-7 two objects were found, part of a brick and a small earthenware pot, with roughly scratched inscriptions in some character that is at least not cuneiform; these are now in the British Museum, numbered 122185 and 120527 respectively. They were published by Father E. Burrows in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* for 1927, pp. 795 ff., and regarded by him as examples of a south-Semitic script. No further attention seems to have been paid to them, and I do not know whether scholars competent to judge are prepared to agree with Father Burrows's reading. Unfortunately in both cases the inscription is a mere shallow and indistinct scratch, very hard to distinguish from accidental marks on the surface, but, especially in the upper line of the brick inscription, my own examination of the original would lead to a version different in several particulars from that of Father Burrows, and containing, out of eight characters in all, four which are identical with the 'Indus' signs, and three more which might less certainly be compared. In the lower line four out of five have definitely the form of signs in the 'Indus' script. With respect to the pot, no. 120527, though resemblances can be found there also, the inscription is so very indistinctly scratched that there is much room for doubt. The inscription, however, is not the only marking upon the pot; under a slight ridge upon the neck is incised a plain zigzag, and just under the mouth, upon the neck, is another scratching roughly of the form . This may, of course, be purely ornamental, but it can hardly fail to suggest a



rough way of writing the commonest sign ( $\nabla$ ) of the 'Indus' script thrice over, to be compared with the pot-mark illustrated in M, pl. xc, no. 7. It should be added that the pot itself appears to be of a distinctly late type, and the brick too may be only a little earlier (*J.R.A.S.*, 1927, p. 795) than Nebuchadrezzar; this, of course, would be unfavourable to the notion of connecting them with the 'Indus' civilization. It is very unsatisfactory to be obliged to leave these two interesting antiquities without a convincing explanation, and thus to have put forward a suggestion which cannot at present be substantiated, but as the matter could appropriately be mentioned here I felt bound to touch upon it.

There is one more feature in some of the seals here published which does not seem open to doubt, namely, the astral character of certain devices. This appears most plainly in No. 12, the figure of the water-carrier whose identity as Aquarius<sup>1</sup> is very plainly suggested by the two stars above his shoulders. It has already been noticed that the whole device on this seal is enclosed in a 'parenthesis': this suggests comparison with the preceding no. 11, which almost as plainly has an astral symbol (Scorpio) accompanied by an ellipse, itself a known character of the 'Indus' writing. It has recently been suggested,<sup>2</sup> with much appearance of reason, that the 'parenthesis' is only a splitting of the ellipse when the sign to be inserted is too big to be enclosed. If this be true there is a double likeness between the seals 11 and 12; in both an astral (zodiacal) figure is associated with the ellipse. There is at least one other example of a zodiacal sign on these seals; on the recent

<sup>1</sup> It may be observed that the 'waterman', as such, was unknown to the Babylonians both in name and figure. The corresponding stars were probably those called *mulgu-la*, i.e. 'the great constellation', and there is no representation of an astral waterman known in Babylonian art. If the figure on this seal is rightly interpreted it would, of course, be the earliest by far of all appearances of this mythical personality.

<sup>2</sup> By Mr. G. R. Hunter in *J.R.A.S.*, 1932, p. 476.

acquisition of the British Museum, no. 18, the figures of the two men side by side (Gemini?) are marked out by their greater size among three other signs. The devices upon the cylinder-seal no. 6 are also very noteworthy in this respect: there is the humped bull, the scorpion, and above them a curiously sprawling figure of a man with a star for his head, and two small serpents. The palm-tree is not at present explicable,<sup>1</sup> and the 'rayed' object in front of the bull is probably only another version of the 'manger'. The bull is so ubiquitous that it would probably be rash to regard him as astral, but if he is so then the seal no. 14 is significant, for there the bull appears in company with what seems to be the moon-god, and the comparison of this god with a bull is of course familiar in Babylonian texts. The fish is a very common sign in the 'Indus' script, but there is at present no example which gives it any such prominence as the waterman, the scorpion, and the twin have in the foregoing instances. The same is true also of the figure of an armed man (CCCLXXVIII in the Sign-Manual of M.); he is probably not an archer at all, and, even if so, there is no reason to call him Sagittarius.

If this astronomical character can hardly be mistaken in the devices of at least three of the seals here published it must be added that herein appears to lie a distinction (others have been noted above) between what may be called the 'Mesopotamian' and the 'native' objects of the same class. The former use, with an astronomical signification, certain figures of the script which in the latter seem to be writing-signs and nothing more. It is nevertheless as well to remember that with any 'hieroglyphic' writing the distinction between a picture and a writing-sign is unreal, at least until we know how the writing is to be read, and the use of one of the signs as a figure on the shell plaque (M, pl. CXXXII, no. 10) at Mohenjo-Daro hints that a seal like the one with

<sup>1</sup> Though it should be mentioned that the palm-tree appears in company with astral symbols on the Black Stone of Esarhaddon in the British Museum.

the waterman-figure would not necessarily have been unfamiliar on the Indus. But the use of astronomical symbols, so characteristic of Babylonia, reinforces the suggestion of the seal with a cuneiform inscription that Ur and the other cities of the land did not simply receive these objects as a strange foreign import, but took some part in the moulding of them. Herein the future has no doubt much to reveal.



PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, OXFORD  
BY JOHN JOHNSON, PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

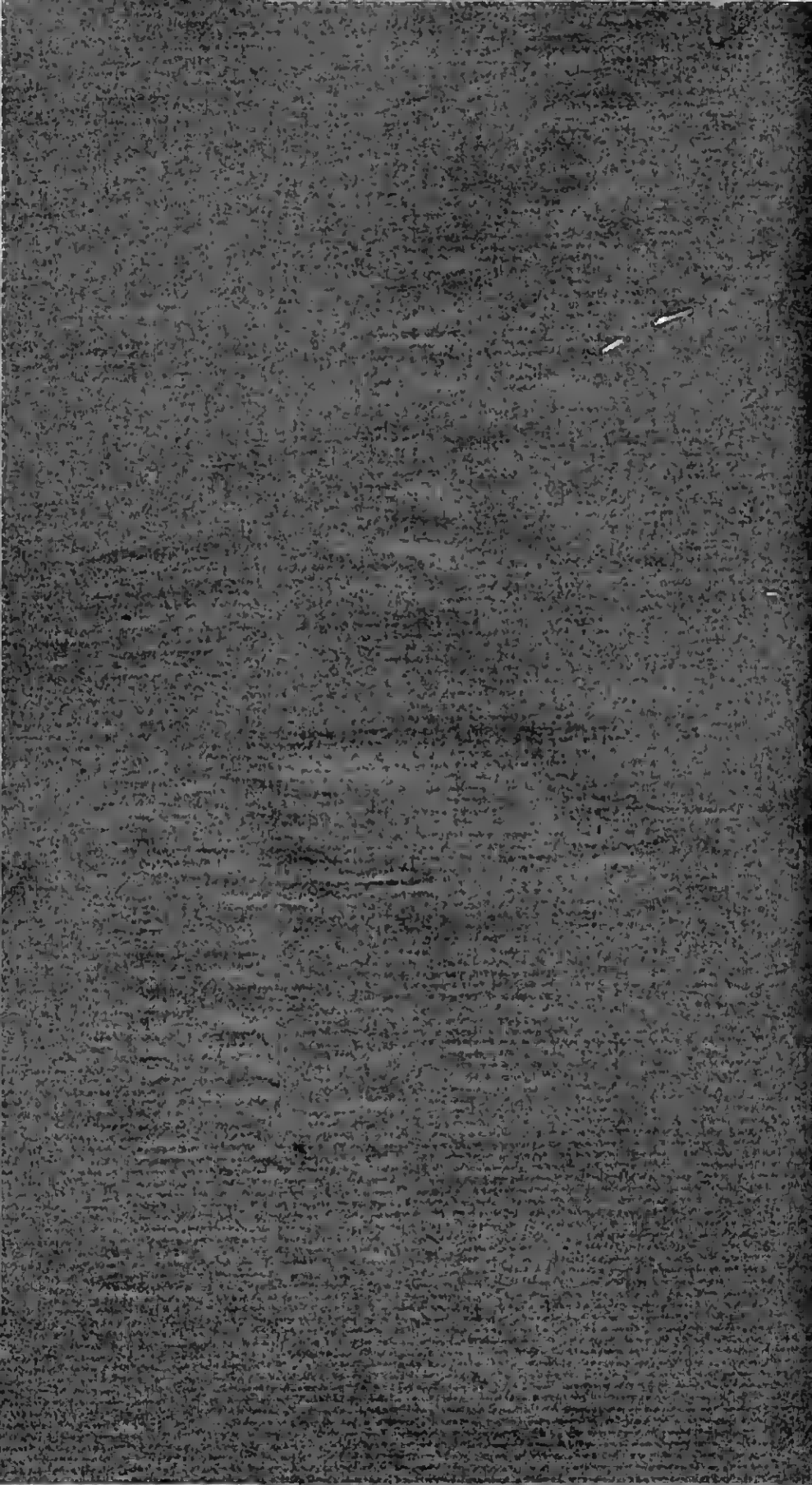














5 <sup>eat</sup> / 18/177

*"A book that is shut is but a block"*

CENTRAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL LIBRARY

GOVT. OF INDIA  
Department of Archaeology  
NEW DELHI.

Please help us to keep the book  
clean and moving.

S. N. 148. N. DELHI.